

The Drug War Hegemony:

The United States in Latin America

International relations are based upon power, the dynamics of these power relations are integral to the interaction of all states. In this regard my work has been focused on examining **how has the United States and a broader group of Latin American states had the character of their relationships changed by a priority on the “War on Drugs” through the early 1970s, up until the early 2000s.** The scope of my study included such works as international treaties, government accounts, accounts from non-government organizations, and works of academia, which were contrasted by the actual actions which participating states took. The three Latin American states I primarily used as a case study were Mexico, Panama, and Colombia. Future decisions on American foreign policy must be based upon an understanding of the status of these existing relationships, a goal that can only come from analysis of them historically. This being said I found that previous conflation of interdiction and international support mechanisms by the United States has had the effect of eroding the legitimacy of the governing institutions of Latin American nations, as well as nurturing both an economic and martially based sphere of influence that has been detrimental to the region.

Suggested Resources

Frydl, Kathleen J. *The Drug Wars in America, 1940-1973*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

MERCILLE, JULIEN. "Violent Narco-Cartels or US Hegemony? The Political Economy of the 'war on Drugs' in Mexico." *Third World Quarterly* 32, no. 9 (2011): 1637-653. www.jstor.org/stable/41341189.

Tokatlián, Juan G. "Drug Summity: A Colombian Perspective." In *Drug Trafficking in the Americas*, edited by Bruce M. Bagley and William O. Walker, 131-149. University of Miami North-South Center, 1994.

As a hegemonic relationship is one in which one state through either overwhelming economic or military means dominates the power dynamics of a relationship.



Towards Future Latin American Relations

- **Consider** the domestic goals of the states we seek to work alongside when tackling the United States international goals
- **Empower** local institutions to make decisions for themselves, the United States has to allow sovereign states to make their own decisions within their borders
- **Apply** the knowledge we have gained from a long history of relationships with other states, thanks to history we have a vast knowledge of what doesn't work in international relations
- **Refrain** from making a mistake which we regularly do, of overly militarizing our relationships with foreign states

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